

## Lentils Take the Spotlight in B.GOOD Restaurant's New Mediterranean Power Bowl Launch

The Canadian pulse industry has adopted a market development strategy of 25 by 2025, which aims to shift 25% of Canadian pulse production to new use markets by 2025. A key part of this strategy is outreach work with United States (U.S.) foodservice operators looking to add new menu items with lentils. Within the foodservice strategy, the focus this year has shifted to target outreach to the commercial foodservice sector, primarily regional and national chain restaurants. Thanks to strong growth in consumer interest in plant-forward ways of eating, even during the pandemic, early successes in this work look promising.

Recently restaurant chain B.GOOD, through partnership with Saskatchewan Pulse Growers' consumer brand Lentils.org, launched a Mediterranean Bowl featuring a base of red lentils. According to 2020 research conducted by Datassential, 48% of consumers, and 57% of millennials want to see lentils offered in power bowl applications at restaurants. Red lentils are also one of the fastest growing plant ingredients on menus, increasing 11.1% year-over-year in menu mentions (Technomic).

"From both flavour and nutrition standpoints, lentils made sense, especially in the salad and bowl category," explains Conor Burke, B.GOOD Head of Marketing. "We believe the Mediterranean Bowl is both a winning build and winning product that our customers will come to love, which is why we are introducing it on our core menu."

"Plant-forward menu items continue to increase in popularity and lentils are uniquely positioned to satisfy protein desires of consumers," says Amber Johnson, Director of Marketing & Communications at Lentils.org.

Menu items such as this power bowl often take years to develop before making it onto a restaurant menu. Through continued collaboration and engagement between Lentils.org and the foodservice sector, the timing has been advantageous to capitalize on menu opportunities. Commercial foodservice (or restaurants) make up 92% of the \$833 billion/year foodservice sector, presenting a significant opportunity to diversify lentils into a new market. While this sector has significant potential, conversion of these opportunities takes place over the longer term, as chain restaurants typically operate on a 12-24 month menu cycle meaning it can take two plus years of working with an operator before they may launch a new limited time offer or menu item.

Lentils.org has been working to increase lentil-based menu items on U.S. menus for a number of years. Through membership and participation in the Healthy Menus R&D Collaborative (HMC), an initiative founded by The Culinary Institute of America, Lentils.org has had a seat at the table crafting practical solutions that contribute towards expanding healthy food and beverage choices within the foodservice industry.

"Being part of HMC has enabled us to connect with foodservice operators, like B.GOOD, to bring healthy, delicious, and sustainable dishes to customers and we look forward to working with other U.S. foodservice operators to support similar offerings," continues Johnson.

The success of this Mediterranean bowl launch with B.GOOD serves as a strong case study and example of the power of collaboration and the strong fit lentils have on restaurant menus. Outreach will continue with an expanded list of targeted operators with hopes to partner with others on menu innovations involving lentils. The commercial foodservice sector has the opportunity to, over time, move a significant volume of Saskatchewan lentils into a new market, creating new and diversified market opportunities for Saskatchewan producers.

